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News Release

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As part of ICAO's activities supporting International Women's Day 2016, the UN aviation agency sponsored a special trip to Montreal on Sunday for 28-year old Shaesta Waiz, so that the young Afghan pilot could make a presentation on Monday to ICAO's 36-State Council regarding her round-the-world solo flight to encourage greater access for women and youth to Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) educations. ICAO and several of its Council States will be supporting the recent graduate of Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University on her ambitious 2016 mission, and Captain Shaesta was duly welcomed with gifts of appreciation and words of encouragement from ICAO's Council President, Dr. Olumuyiwa Benard Aliu (centre left) and its Secretary General, Dr. Fang Liu (centre right). Together with other Council Representatives, the ICAO officials and Shaesta affixed an ICAO logo and the flags of several ICAO Member States to the fuselage of her Beechcraft Bonanza – signifying their official support for her 2016 campaign.

DREAMS SOAR FOR INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY AS ICAO HONOURS ADVENTUROUS YOUNG PILOT AND HER AMBITIOUS ROUND-THE-WORLD SOLO FLIGHT FOR GIRLS' ACCESS TO STEM

MONTREAL, 8 MARCH 2016 – To help commemorate International Women's Day 2016, and in support of its Next Generation Aviation Professionals programme, the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) sponsored a flight to Montreal this past Sunday by Captain Shaesta Waiz, a 28 year-old pilot from Afghanistan who the UN agency is supporting on her courageous 'Dreams Soar' 2016 round-the-world flight.

The young Afghan pilot was met on the apron at Montreal-Trudeau airport by ICAO's Council President, Dr. Olumuyiwa Benard Aliu, the agency's Secretary General, Dr. Fang Liu, several ICAO Member and Council State Representatives and other dignitaries from the Organization.

Seeking to encourage women worldwide to believe in themselves and to allow their 'dreams to soar', Captain Shaesta will fly through 33 stops on five continents beginning early this June. Her goal is to raise awareness for greater global access to Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) education for women and youth, something she explained in greater depth during a special presentation to the ICAO Council on Monday afternoon.

"I have a very strong passion for aviation that I want to share. But it's more than that. I want to show women that they can succeed in anything – including flying around the world," she remarked. "My aviation dreams have had a huge impact in making me the pilot and the woman I am today, and I'm very

grateful for ICAO's recognition and support as I embark on this incredible voyage for STEM."

Born in a refugee camp in Afghanistan and driven by a passion for aviation, Shaesta Waiz eventually went on to become that country's first certified civilian female pilot.

When she completes her Dreams Soar journey later in 2016 it will be another big first, establishing her as the youngest female pilot in history to complete a round-the-world solo flight.

"Aviation has always called out to adventurers and innovators, and Shaesta is a tremendous example of what our sector is looking for in the next generation of aviation professionals," remarked ICAO Council President Dr. Olumuyiwa Benard Aliu. "How well we attract the best and the brightest young men and women to aviation careers will be critical to how effectively we confront and manage the challenges of growth which lie ahead, and Shaesta and her journey are an inspiration to them all."

"International Women's Day is a time to call for change and to celebrate the acts of courage and determination by ordinary women who have played an extraordinary role in the history of their countries and communities – Shaesta is a great example of all of these qualities." commented ICAO Secretary General Dr. Fang Liu. "The United Nations' goal this 8 March is to help accelerate the 2030 Agenda and build momentum for Sustainable Development Goals 4 and 5 which are directly related to women's empowerment. ICAO is honoured to be supporting Shaesta and her journey to raise awareness on these issues in our States and industry, as well as to help highlight the importance of greater gender parity and opportunities for women across aviation's global network."

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